PBASE Magazine

April 2006

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Pro Photographer for April

Joe McNally

ISSUE 5 | APRIL | 2006

PBASE.com MAGAZINE

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PHOTOGRAPHERS: THOSE WHO COMPOSE PICTURES AND THOSE WHO TAKE THEM. THE FORMER WORK IN STUDIOS. FOR THE LATTER, THE STUDIO IS THE WORLD.... FOR THEM, THE ORDINARY DOESN'T EXIST: EVERY THING IN LIFE IS A SOURCE OF NOURISHMENT. -ERNST HAAS, QUOTED BY LACOUTURE, 1989:49

Editorial Notes

COVER PHOTO BY MARCIO CABRAL
DESIGN BY GARY BLANCHETTE

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FROM : The Editor's Desk

The circle is now complete. Our first issue launched on 11th April 2005. This fifth issue comes to you, exactly one year later, on 11th April 2006. In some ways, completing this one year is similar to the exhiliration of completing one year of PAD (Photo-A-Day). Sticking to a schedule is always a challenge. But once you do it, the results are well worth it.

The readership community of the PBase Magazine has grown well since the start – based on the statistics that PBase keeps for us, it looks like there are around 45,000 to 55,000 downloads per magazine within two months of the release of each magazine. When we first launched the magazine, we committed to keep it free and that is exactly what we have maintained. No money, no advertisements.

Speaking of money, we did launch 'PBase Magazine branded apparel' a few months ago as an option to donations. Readers can now visit http://www.pbase.com/magazine/buy and choose to buy these items – you get something nice, we get $2 from your purchase to do what we want to do.

Now onto this issue: Eric has pretty much become a part of our core team as the co-editor. He has aleady lined up a series of impressive people to interview for our magazine. This time he managed to rope in Joe McNally, a very well known photographer (Faces of Ground Zero amongst many other famous works). We also have several other (hopefully) interesting sections including the PBase photographer of the month, Marcio Cabral.

Once again, I invite our readers to send us an email if they wish to contribute. As one example, in this issue, we present another user perspective article on the 'Rollei digital bundle' by Oleg who had emailed us about this idea months ago. While interacting with Oleg, it was fascinating to see how well connected he was with the MF (Medium Format) photography world – when he sent me images from official Rollei photographers as well as images of Rollei production plants, I almost fell off my chair. The effort he put into this article was commendable. Similarly, Neil contacted us about writing up a trip report on Italy – and his passion really shows through in what he sent us. The same holds true for each section of this magazine – those who have worked with us will agree that we just throw out an idea and let the authors shape the contents their own way. Why suppress innovation ?

It is really a symbiotic relationship – we offer a space and an audience of 50,000 readers to those who are interested. In return, the contributors work really hard to make their articles interesting and valuable to the reader base. However, it is our responsibility to work with the authors to fine tune the article until both of us are satisfied that this article provides enough information to be useful (a subjective opinion of the editors). Therefore, if you do work with us, please do not be averse to re-doing portions of your article.

Finally, we also have a fun section at the PBase corner where a bunch of PADers from the UK got together for a day and shared their experiences with us.

And as before, Gary, Wanda and Larena continue to work behind the scenes to make this magazine the success it it.

Enjoy.

Arjun Roychowdhury
www.pbase.com/arjunrc

PBASE-PHOTOGRAPHER:Marcio Cabral

Marcio Cabral's first contact with photography was about eight years ago. He was exposed to landscape photography four years ago which has since become his passion. Even though Marcio does not do photography for a living, it supplements his primary job well, funding his equipment as well as various photographic expeditions. Along the years, he has gained good recognition, including prizes in various photo contests, publications in magazines of tourism and nature and in some books and guides on pictures from Brazil in foreign countries. His images are sold through image banks and also through Paypal. He intends to become a full time photographer in a few years, and wants to devote his time exclusively to conduct workshops and photographing expeditions within Brazil and out of it.

PBase Magazine: How did you first get interested in photography?

Marcio: I started to get interested in photography in 1998 for academic needs. At that time I was producing an ecotourism

Heirs of Quilombo

documentary of a wild location in Brazil that would be used in my graduation thesis in geography. It was very challenging to get the required images because the locations in question were hardly photographed by others before. The few existing images were very poor in quality. With no options to look at, I then decided to photograph these places myself - and this motivated me to study and being interested in photography, it was then that I bought my first SLR camera.

PBM: Many people in the digital era seem to change camera gear every few months. Do you remember what was your first camera – and how many iterations did you go through in equipment change till today?

Here in Brazil the reality is different from the United States and Europe. The purchasing power of the population is lesser and the taxes are very high. Photographic equipments here are sold at exorbitant prices. Just as a comparison, a D200 in Brazil costs the same , or bit more than a 5D in the US. These higher prices hinder frequent upgrades of equipment in Brazil. Therefore I change my cameras usually only every 2 years or when it is necessary. My first SLR camera, the Nikon N50, was the cheapest model available by Nikon on the market at that time, that I bought in 1998. I liked the N50, although it was an amateur camera and lacked some professional features. It proved to be an impressive entry level auto-focus SLR camera. I used it extensively and despite the fact that it suffered some bad falls during its life, I never had any problems with it. In fact, it works well even to this day. For this very reason I decided to invest in the Nikon system. In 2000 I decided to buy a more robust body with more professional features and settled on the N90s. In 2002 I noticed that I didn't really need a robust and heavy body, and so I bought an N80. The N80 was a much lighter and versatile camera and ideal for taking nature pictures.

PROFILE

NAME: MARCIO CABRAL

WEBSITE: HTTP://WWW.PBASE.COM/MARCIOCABRAL

FROM: BRASILIA, BRAZIL

YEARS AS PHOTOGRAPHER: 6+

PHOTOGRAPHY STYLE: NATURE, LADSCAPE, CITYSCAPE

EQUIPMENT: NIKON D70, N80, SB 800, NIKKOR 12-24, 28-70, 70-200, 50MM MACRO, 20MM

MARCIO'S MAGIC:

Wild flowers and dry tree

Gate Light

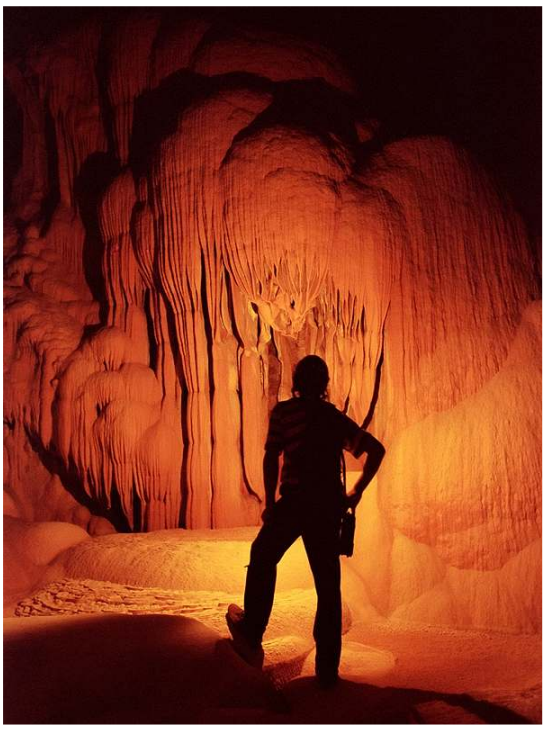
Noronha's sunrise

With the release of D70 in 2004 it was possible to do the transition to digital without losing quality and/or features. This year I plan to buy a D200, which I intend to use for at least two more years. I also have a portable Sony W1 for snapshots. I intend to change it for a Canon SD700 IS this year.

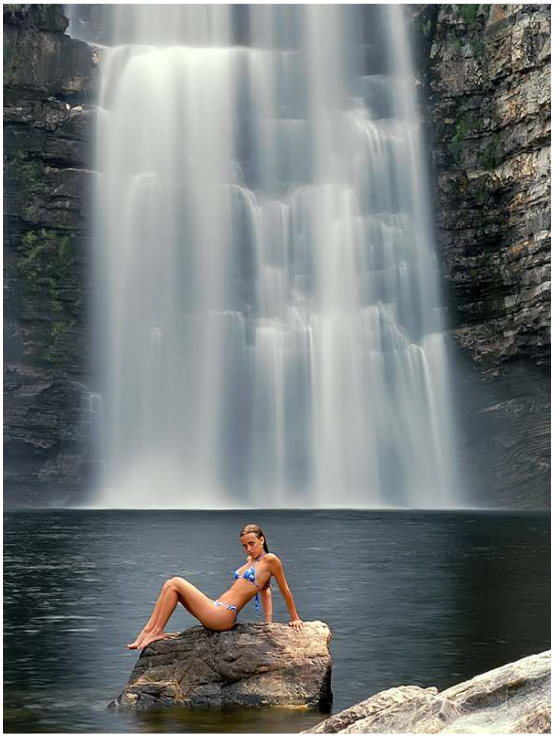
PBM: Looking at your "Digital vs. Film" galleries, it seems you still shoot with Film (or at least did so till recently). What are your opinions on the two mediums and would you still use film for any reason?

Nowadays the DSLR cameras between six to eight MP produce images with equivalent quality or even superior to the best films of 35mm as Velvia and E100vs.

The digital images produce less noise and the sensors capture much more details in the shadows than in slide films. I still use film, because I love the saturated colors of Velvia and the E100vs. I find those colours much more beautiful for landscape pictures. Digital sensors reproduce closer colours of the real world, being better than film for pictures and nightshots.
In addition there are several other advantages of the digital system. My total transition to the digital world is inevitable and I intend to abandon film completely as soon I use up all my film stock stored in the fridge.



Cave Explorer



Rio Preto falls

PBM: How vibrant is the Brazilian photographer community?

Brazil always had great names in the photography world but photographic art was never so popularized as it is in the US and Europe. However, with the arrival of the digital era, photography has radically changed in Brazil. New talented photographers continue to emerge in a wide variety of areas. The amount of specialized magazines, sites and other information sources has grown significantly in Brazil in the last few years. The digital revolution has opened the option of photography to a much wider audience which is really wonderful.

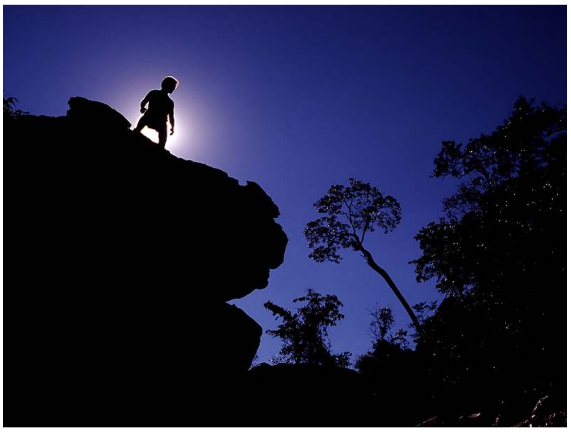
PBM: What are the mediums for amateur photographers to sell their work and/or services in Brazil? Are contracting jobs for Weddings and events a common occurrence in Brazil as it is in the US? Are there differences?

Most of the amateur photographers have other jobs that supplement them financially, but there are some who work on events for websites or friends' marriages, eventually getting some work charging a much lower price to do the work done than the professionals.
Events and marriages are usually covered by specialized companies, who supply packages

Self portrait

Sunset at JK Bridge

Marcio exploring cave falls



Aura

with pictures and video at a much higher cost.

There are also many specialized professional photographers in events who offer to produce good quality work at a reduced price. This hinders the amateurs' entrance in this market.

I believe the situation in the US is better for a beginning photographer to get work because of a larger consumer market there.

PBM: Your 'Magic Hour' gallery is fascinating. What is your favorite landscape lens?

My favorite lenses for landscape are the wide angles. They have a larger DOF and they are also the best lenses to work with graduated filters. I love my Nikkor 12-24DX. It works very well in a 17-24mm film camera or a DSLR Full Frame. This is a great advantage because if in the future, Nikon or Fuji releases a full frame body then I won't have the need to replace this lens.

PBM: Do you use grad-filters or do you prefer to use Photoshop to merge multiple exposures?

Both the techniques work well, but I prefer to use grad filters because I think they produce a more natural effect. Another advantage of the filter is that it avoids the manipulation work. In some places the digital blend is more suitable, mainly when the gradation is very uneven (example in mountains). In these cases the graduated filter produces a shadow area across the top of the mountains which is very noticeable. Of late, I use the two techniques simultaneously, and it has been producing better results than using the filter or the digital blend individually.

PBM: Could you tell our readers if you use any special Photoshop techniques? (Toning, etc.)

I try to simplify my workflow as much as possible. I use different types of filters on the lenses and I try to do a good treatment in the raw converter so that I have less work to do in Photoshop. The tools that I use the most are levels, curve and color balance. These tools solve more than 90% of my problems. Occasionally I use the shadow/highlight feature of photoshop to recover some details in some images.
Some times, (though very rarely) I use selective colors to treat indivdual colors. Selective colors can also be used as a digital polarizer. If you treat the cyan and blue channels individually you can increase the contrast to saturate the colors of the sky, but it should be used with caution so as not to cause posterization. The shadow/highlight and selective colour tools are resources that I use in less than 10% of my images.
To convert colored pictures to black and white I prefer to work with plug-ins. I usually use Fred Miranda BW Workflow or NIK BW Tonal Conversion Enhancer. To give a sepia toning like the photo of the cover of this magazine I use the Hue / Saturation tool with colorize. A Hue value between 10 to 30 usually works well. Saturation level can be boosted according to personal taste- I prefer a value between 5 and 25.

PBM: Going back to your magic hour pictures, typically what is your favorite 'time spot' for these pictures? (how much time before or after sunrise/sunset)?

Unfortunately there is no magic formula that can determine the best time. You can be pleasantly surprised or disappointed every minute when you are photographing in the magic hour and it is this very reason that turns magic-hour shooting into such an exciting

Paepalanthus

Cerrado sunset

Cover photo (Calunga's children) converted to toned B&W as described by Marcio

Pico mount

game! What will indicate the best time to shoot is going to be a combination of weather and the atmospheric conditions. There are many physical factors such as the latitude and the time of the year for different places that could influence best time for photography. Therefore, I do not worry too much about the time but concentrate on the weather when I am photographing. By observing the sky and the formations of the clouds it is possible to forsee the best time a few minutes before it happens.

PBM: It seems in addition to striking landscapes, you do a variety of other work including cityscapes, people, nudes and others. Do you do these professionally or as a hobby?

Photography is not my full time job. I do have other means of income. I am specializing in nature pictures, but in the meantime, I try to photograph people and the cities that I visit; and these are the images that I have interest in marketing. I have other galleries with pictures of nudes and snapshots of parties that I do only if I have any spare time. Those galleries don't have commercial interest for me.

PBM: Describe for us a day in the life of Marcio Cabral on any assignment of your choice – how you planned your day, the equipment you carried and any interesting experiences.

I do not photograph every day, there are times when I spend weeks without taking a single shot. I photograph extensively only when I am traveling. One of the more interesting experiences that I have had was when I was photographing caves. Speleophotography is difficult and unexpected because several of the camera resources are limited in an atmosphere of total darkness.

When I plan a photographic expedition to these sort of places my biggest concern is with the weight of the equipment. I only put in what is strictly necessary. All the equipment should be well protected from shocks and from water. I use my LowePro DryZone backpack for carrying my equipment. In some extreme situations I use the pelican case to protect my equipment. The caves that I visit are not for tourism and they don't have artificial illumination. Some of them are very extensive and sometimes you need to stay on location for a few days to get to the best shots. I take flashes and carbide reactors as light fronts. In dark places inside the caves, I prefer to use the "paint with light" technique. The results will depend on how you handle the ‘‘light brushes’’. That ends up to be very exhausting work because you need to spend long hours to produce each image.

PBM: For an amateur landscape photographer looking to visit Brazil for a photography trip, and has only three days to spend, which places would you suggest he visits?

Brazil has amazing places of landscape and wildlife to be photographed. A trip of only three days is really a very small period of time to photograph. Brazil is a huge country and different places are at their best at different times of the year from a photography perspective. The choice of the time of the year is important because there are places which rain with great intensity throughout the year.
It is difficult to choose a place because that depends on personal taste. For those who prefer to photograph birds and wildlife, I would suggest the swamplands. I personally like to photograph seascapes. I would recommend visiting Fernando De Noronha Island. It is a small island and has plenty of amazing locations close to each other. It is a place that is ideal for great and varied pictures across a small land area. I visited the island in September 2003 in a trip that took one week and I was very satisfied with the results.

You can see my images of the island at:
http://www.pbase.com/marciocabral/noronha_island

Prata falls

Dawn in Tiririca beach

Twilight at Barra Grande

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

PRO-CORNER: Joe McNally

Joe McNally is a freelance photographer who shoots assignments for magazines, advertising agencies and graphic design firms. He has an extensive background shooting for *Sports Illustrated*, *National Geographic*, *LIFE*, and *The New York Times Magazine*, among others. He was selected as one of the "100 Most Important People in Photography" by *American Photo Magazine*, which described him as "perhaps the most versatile photojournalist working today." He has won numerous other awards including the *Alfred Eisenstaedt Elsie Award* for "Outstanding Magazine Photograph," and in 2001, *Nikon Inc.* awarded him placement on their websites prestigious list of photographers noted as "Legends Behind the Lens." He has been honored numerous times by *Communication Arts*, *Applied Arts*, *Photo District News, Pictures of the Year*, *American Photo, the World Press Photo Foundation*, *the Art Director's Club, and Graphics*. In addition to teaching at the *Eddie Adams* workshop, McNally has taught at the *National Geographic Masters of Photography* Series, the *Smithsonian Institute, RIT, Maine Photo Workshops*, and the *Disney Institute*. In response to September 11, 2001, he conceived and photographed "Faces at Ground Zero – Giant Polaroid Project," which has become known as one of the most significant artistic responses to the tragedy. The project was published in the books "One Nation" and "Faces of Ground Zero," and the photos were exhibited on a seven-city tour in 2002, receiving an enormous amount of media attention.

PBase Magazine: I've got to ask first: why do you wake up at 5:00 every morning!?

McNally: It's just kind of forced to happen at this point, I guess. Life on the road is not all that conducive to sleep. The hard part about the road is not so much sometimes the job at hand, but also keeping all the other balls in the air and sometimes the only way to do that is to get up early and try to work it out.

PBM: How did you first become interested in photography?

I was in school. I went to school to be a writer and part of the writing curriculum required that you take a photography course, which I didn't get around to doing until the second semester of my senior year. When I did do that, I guess you could say a bell went off in my head. It felt completely natural for me to do.

PBM: An astronaut who you were once shooting said, "You're pretty sick and twisted in terms of your imagination." How much of your craft did you learn vs. what is completely natural?

Probably a little bit of both. I do have a fairly active imagination, I will own up to that. I grew up going to five different grammar schools and moving around a bunch, always trying to adjust to a new school. You find yourself making your own fun sometimes and you look at the world in an interesting way, hopefully. Especially when you realize that you are in a visual medium, your imagination takes over. I look at a job and I try to pre-visualize things and sometimes it doesn't even come close to working out in that direction, and occasionally it does. I guess you could say, in certain ways, that I am ambitious visually. I think about how to solve problems or how to portray something in, hopefully, an interesting way and go in with that thought.

Troops in the Swamp

PBM: How would you categorize your style of photography?

A generalist, basically. But if you were to throw a label at me, that would be photojournalist.

PBM: Are there certain photographers who have influenced your style and/or who you admire?

Oh lots, absolutely. A lot of my colleagues, past and contemporary. Carl Mydans was my own personal hero in this industry; he was a staffer at Life Magazine. Someone like Gordon Parks who just passed away. I guess I am bit of a generalist, too, in turns of admiring different kinds of work. I like and admire everybody from a David Burnett to a Greg Heisler to David LaChapelle.

JOE'S CORNER:

Joanne

"I do have a fairly active imagination, I will own up to that. I grew up going to five different grammar schools and moving around a bunch, always trying to adjust to a new school. You find yourself making your own fun sometimes and you look at the world in an interesting way, hopefully."

PROFILE

NAME: JOE MCNALLY

WEBSITE: WWW.JOEMCNALLY.COM

FROM: MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

PHOTOGRAPHY STYLE: GENERALIST

EQUIPMENT: SEVERAL NIKON CAMERAS AND LENSES

PBM: You are one of the most sought after photographers in the world. What do you think makes "Joe McNally" such a success?

That's an ambitious question, for sure. I don't really view myself as that. I always view myself as a working photographer. To the extent I've been in demand has been a blessing, but I think being a generalist, being able to tackle lots of different types of assignments, has certainly helped me make my way through my career. I've always resisted specialization and continue to do so now. I'm curious about a lot of stuff. When I teach now, I always tell young photographers that one of the primary and most important pieces of equipment that you have in your camera bag is your essential sense of curiosity in the world. If people are doing interesting things and I am interested in it, I will go after it on a visual level.

PBM: You teach a lot of seminars and photography classes on lighting. Is lighting the most important aspect of photography?

Lighting is critical. It's the language of photography, it's how we speak as photographers. It is a very, very important thing

Dan in the lake

to…I hesitate to say master, because you never really master it, but at least be able to use it in a creative and interesting way. Lots of situations that you encounter visually are going to rise or fall on the quality of light presented.

PBM: If you are in a situation where the lighting is not ideal, then what do you do?

I travel with lighting gear. The kind of assignments I get are not the kind of assignments that one can just shrug and say, "Oh, the light is not very good, I'll come back tomorrow." Very few photographers get those assignments because frankly, magazines and places just don't have the budget to let you stay and linger and wait in hope that something will turn to your advantage. I travel with lighting, sometimes its small battery operated units, sometimes it is large studio strobes. That is a component of how I travel and has been for many, many years.

PBM: Are most of your photographs in color?

Yes. I've done some black and white, but 95 percent of what I've done is color.

PBM: Why do you prefer to shoot in color over black and white?

I think it goes back to my imagination or the way I see the world. I do see the world in color. I grew up on comic books a great deal as a kid – big comic book fan – and comic books are really wonderful and are able to move you through a story with a lot of impact, with a lot of color. That perhaps, translated into how I see now. However when I think about things, most of the time I think of color palettes.

PBM: You have been given a lot of exciting opportunities over your career. Is there one that really stands out for being the most exhilarating or the one you enjoyed the most?

Probably the most complete assignment I ever got as a photographer was to photograph for the National Geographic a story called the "Sense of Sight." That was a story I shot quite a while ago, but it remains, for me, quite an amazing experience. The story ran 40 pages and a cover and it was a very, very expensive, ambitious look at how the way we see-how the eye works. As you can imagine, that's a pretty amazing thing to be assigned to do.

PBM: In 2002, you had to convince National Geographic to shoot their cover story on "Flying: Faster, Farther, Smarter" in digital. Why did you feel so strongly about doing that?

We're in a digital world. In 2002 [digital] was on everybody's doorstep knocking on the door and even more so now. It's through the door and in the house now! The Geographic, being a fairly traditional publication, had yet to really take a look at that aspect of the medium as it applied to their workflow. And my editor at the Geographic

Ralph

Blue Angels Flying High

"I always view myself as a working photographer. To the extent I've been in demand has been a blessing, but I think being a generalist, being able to tackle lots of different types of assignments, has certainly helped me make my way through my career. I've always resisted specialization and continue to do so now"

Joe on convincing National Geographic to go Digital:

"We're in a digital world. In 2002 [digital] was on everybody's doorstep knocking on the door and even more so now. It's through the door and in the house now! The [National] Geographic, being a fairly traditional publication, had yet to really take a look at that aspect of the medium as it applied to their workflow. And my editor at the [National] Geographic and I…felt like let's add a new angle, let's see if we could do this in a new way. And also for me, personally, it was something else new to learn."

Kelvin in the box

and I…felt like let's add a new angle, let's see if we could do this in a new way. And also for me, personally, it was something new to learn.

PBM: How did you sell "Digital" to National Geographic?

We had some meetings about it and I tried to show them that the quality of digital had arrived with the same level of quality they were used to and insisted on. The arrival of the Nikon D1X camera was the first digital camera I felt could give me the kind of quality I had gotten used to from shooting film all those years. And I had just, by chance, been invited by the US Navy to shoot aboard the aircraft carrier Truman. I spent three days on board the Truman, and that played into the topic at hand, which was aviation. So I was able to make the efforts I made aboard the Truman and made very sizable prints and brought them into the Geographic meetings. The prints were impressive looking. It became pretty obvious, quickly, that there were no real quality issues here. For them at that point, it just became an issue of work flow (how do they organize it? how do they handle it after using film all these years?). Since that time, I would say 70 percent of the assignments at the National Geographic are being shot digitally.

PBM: You teach about the "business of photography." For someone who wants to make a living at taking pictures, what is your number one advice to them?

In your business life, you have to approach it as a business. We tend to be spontaneous, combustible, imaginative, creative people, hopefully, and that's a good thing about photographers. Sometimes that doesn't translate particularly well into the best business instincts. That is certainly the case with me: I might talk to people about good business practices, but have rarely, rarely practiced them. You have to walk into this with your eyes open, knowing that it's a very difficult thing to do, to make your way through this industry and survive economically. You have to walk into this with your eyes open and with an organized framework in your head for how you are going to survive, because your art--the creative aspects of your photography--will not survive if you cannot stay in business.

PBM: In 2003, the Photo District News gave www.joemcnally.com an award for outstanding website. How important is the internet in this day and age in not only photography, but in the business aspect as well?

It's huge, it's absolutely huge. It's not only a means of communication, it's a means of promotion and marketing. Given the ever increasing pace of doing business and delivering a job to a client, it is absolutely essential to know how to use the internet to not only learn how to get a job, but to track a job, plan a job, research a job, but also then in many instances to deliver a job.

PBM: You shoot 90 percent digital now. How do you decide when to use film?

Film is really a client driven request at this point. It is assumed I am going to shoot digital for everybody unless they specifically step forward and request film.

PBM: You will spend days setting up the perfect photo shoot. Do you ever rely on Photoshop?

No, I don't. Photoshop is a wonderful tool, but unless the assignment specifically calls for the use of Photoshop – and I have had those – I generally go out into the field figuring whatever I am going to do, I am going to do it within the camera.

PBM: What do you make of all the people, especially in photojournalism, that use Photoshop to doctor photos?

Well, there is no question that we are joined at the hip now, on the computer, as a tool and we have to use it as not only a storage device, but as a delivery device, as a viewing device, it's our lab, all of that sort of thing. Every digital photo that you make gets interpolated. To some degree, there are modest things that need to happen, like sharpening and things like that. Those are basic tools that are similar or go back to the basic tools we had working in a black and white darkroom. I came through many years shooting transparencies in mostly color. When it comes out of the camera, you are done; that is what you give to the client and that, to me, is photography. When you layer onto that an extensive amount of Photoshop manipulation, then you are talking about a different art form, it is a different skill. I am not saying it is evil and I'm

Irwin on the coast of Maine

"No, I don't [use photoshop]. Photoshop is a wonderful tool, but unless the assignment specifically calls for the use of Photoshop…I generally go out into the field figuring whatever I am going to do, I am going to do it within the camera."

Ironman Triathalon in the Kona coast

"In your business life, you have to approach it [photography] as a business. We tend to be spontaneous, combustible, imaginative, creative people, hopefully, and that's a good thing about photographers. Sometimes that doesn't translate particularly well into the best business instincts."

not saying it is not occasionally necessary, but I think there needs to be a separation in the way we understand how we use that tool.

PBM: What are the responsibilities of a photojournalist?

I always tell students you have to, first off, work extremely hard, be true to yourself and true to your subject and true to your client. If you can do all those things, no matter if you had a good or bad day in the field, you can go back to your hotel room and sleep well. You just have to be truthful and it's our responsibility as photographers to understand what a privilege it is to do this. Because we have cameras in our hands we're often times allowed a window on the world that is denied many, many people, or most people. When you're out there shooting for a magazine, you have to remember that you've got sometimes millions of pairs of eyes resting on your shoulders. You're their eyes. You have this enormous responsibility and privilege of telling them the story as you see it. That's a pretty

Pegasus

sizable responsibility.

PBM: How key is doing your homework/research before you photograph someone?

Very, very important. It is very important to know as much as you can before you go in there. 'Cause then you are better able to sustain the twists and turns and surprises of the assignment and, to some degree, people are flattered and that gives you a bit of an edge. People are naturally pre-disposed to like the fact that you took the time to do your homework.

PBM: One of your recent most famous works is the "Faces at Ground Zero" project. How did you come up with the idea and then execute it?

The Ground Zero project really came out of a desire and need to be involved in some level, as many people felt at the time. I am not a cop or firefighter; I am a photographer. So, within the content of being able to offer something at the time that was positive, the only thing I could really offer was my pictures. A lot of my colleagues were on the streets at the time, photographing the scenes of 9-11 in a reportage fashion. So I started to think about how I could possibly do something or offer something that was different. I did have this knowledge, or working knowledge, actually, of this very strange and singular camera and I started to think about how I could apply that to this disaster. When I got the idea, I immediately formulated it and emailed it to a couple of people I knew at Time Warner. Surprisingly, I got a positive reception and it only took a few days to get the approval and we then moved onto the next step of execution with the camera I had in mind (the giant Polaroid).

PBM: Can you describe the giant Polaroid camera you used?

One of the most common analogies is to compare this camera to a one car garage. It is so big that you could almost drive your car into it.
It is essentially a giant pinhole camera. It is a big room with a lens stuck in the wall and your subject is outside. The lens is about a 60 or 70 pound piece of glass. And, understandably, it is not a particularly easy camera to work. At F-45 you have a depth of field of about a half of an inch, and it requires a lot of light and a lot of punch from strobes to make it work really well (or at least the way we were approaching it). That is the tough part of using the camera: its physical size and technical difficulties that you have to surmount. The upside of the camera also stems from the size: you have this life size Polaroid, life size image, which is an amazing way to represent a human being.

PBM: You once said, "Making mistakes is part of being a photographer." Hold on. You make mistakes?!?!

All the time. If you are really pushing and trying to force yourself to do something new or just getting excited about the idea of going out there and shooting pictures, you are bound to make mistakes.

PBM: If you never took that photography class in Syracuse University, do you ever think "Where would I be now?

I don't worry about where I would be, because that is kind of unknowable. But, it is funny how life turns on very simple things.

PBM: Thank you so much for your time. We would also like to express our great thanks to Lynn DelMastro (Joe's studio manager/producer) for helping with the logistics of the interview.

Enjoy. Take care.

"I always tell students you have to, first off, work extremely hard, be true to yourself and true to your subject and true to your client. If you can do all those things, no matter if you had a good or bad day in the field, you can go back to your hotel room and sleep well"

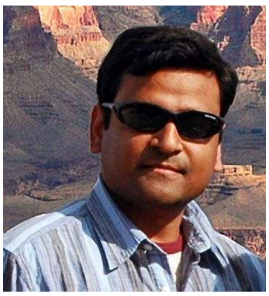
On making mistakes:

"All the time. If you are really pushing and trying to force yourself to do something new or just getting excited about the idea of going out there and shooting pictures, you are bound to make mistakes."

Tom Working on the top of the Empire State Building

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

DO-IT-YOURSELF: Frame your photos



Punit Sinha's passion for photography was kindled five years ago, when, during a trip to North Carolina, he took a picture of a waterfall in manual mode and it turned out the way he intended. After that there was no looking back. It has been a long journey since then and his quest for knowledge keeps him going. He is a landscape photographer and his love for travel has provided him with lots of photo opportunities. His website, http://www.punitsinha.com is a showcase of some of his landscape pictures, some good, some not so good. Either way, it reminds him of knowledge gained or mistakes made.

Framing is a difficult process only until you know what is involved. This hands-on tutorial aims at explaining the process of framing so that you can frame your prints yourself and experience the joy of taking your composition from the view finder to the frame on the wall.

To begin with, here is the list of things that we will need. A print, a mat board, a backing board (The two most common types of backing board are foam core and corrugated. I use foam core backing board), a mat cutter, a straight edge blade, a bevel edge blade, (Logan 301s compact mat cutting system comes with a mat cutter, a straight edge cutting head and a bevel edge cutting head.), a steel ruler, a utility knife, a pencil, a repositionable matting tape, a permanent matting tape, a tape dispenser, a pair of gloves, and a frame with glass.

***Note**: Going forward, a reference to a dimension of X by Y inches would mean a width of X inches and height of Y inches.*

The dimensions of the print I chose to frame are 10 by 6.1 inches and I decided that it will look nice in a frame of 14 by 11 inches. So I start with selecting a white mat board with white core (You can also go for black core if that suits your picture. More on core later.). The dimensions of my mat board are 18 by 14.5 inches, so I figured that I need to cut 4 inches from the width and 3.5 inches from the height to get a mat board of 14 by 11 inches. The 14 by 11 mat board will fit in a 14 by 11 frame. I loosen the mat guide (Fig2) and adjust it to the 4 inch mark on the scale (Fig3).

Figure 1:
1. mat cutter
2. picture
3. gloves
4.frame with glass
5. tape dispenser
6. permanent matting tape
7. straight edge cutter
8. bevel edge cutter
9. foam core backing board
10. mat board
11. pencil
12. utility knife
13. steel ruler

Figure 2

Figure 3

SETUP COST:

1. mat cutter - $80 off EBay
2. picture - Priceless
3. gloves - $0.59c per pair
4. frame with glass - $15 on sale
5. tape dispenser - $5
6. permanent Matting tape - $5
7. straight edge cutter - included in 1 above
8. bevel edge cutter - included in 1 above
9. foam core backing board - $10 for 32 by 40 from local stores
10. mat board - $15 for 32 by 40 from local stores
11. pencil – you already have one
12. utility knife - $3
13. steel ruler - $5

TOTAL: US $138.59

I now place the mat board in the mat cutter and with one swift motion I pull the straight cutting head towards myself. (Fig4).I repeat that for the other side, this time adjusting the mat guide to 3.5 inches on the scale. Now I have a mat board of 14 by 11 inches.

Figure 4

Next I go for the backing board. I pick a piece of foam core backing board, larger than 14 by 11 inches. I draw a rectangle of 14 by 11 inches. I place the steel ruler, perfectly aligning it on one of the sides of the drawn rectangle. Using a utility knife, I apply just enough pressure to pierce only the top layer of the board. Starting from the farthest point I pull the blade towards myself, making sure that the blade never leaves the steel ruler by angling the blade just a bit into the ruler, just as if I am cutting a sliver out of the ruler. (Fig 5)

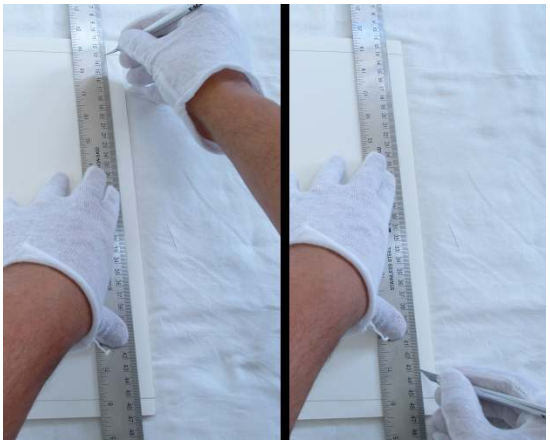


Figure 5

I go back to the starting point and repeat the cut, only this time the pressure is just enough to pierce the foam of the foam core backing board. I repeat the cut one more time, and this time the pressure is just enough to cut the lower layer of the backing board. Using this three cut technique you will see that the edges are very smooth. Infact, I found it smoother than the cut made by my local framing shop using their dedicated foam core backing board cutters. (Fig 6)

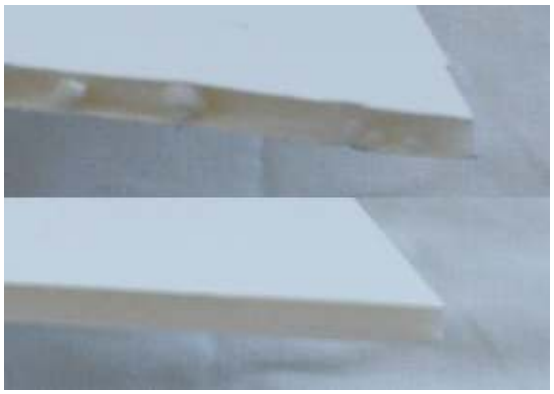


Figure 6: Local shop (top) vs. my 3 pass method

Going back to my mat, I need to cut a window opening in the mat board. I flip the mat board upside down and draw a window opening for my picture. The dimensions of my print are 10 by 6.1 inches and therefore the dimension of this opening would be 9.5 by 5.6 inches. It is advisable to leave an extra margin of quarter of an inch on each side for taping the print to the mat board. Notice that only 9.5 by 5.6 of the image will show through the window. A little math tells me that the top and bottom margin would be 2.7 inches and the left and right margin would be 2.25 inches. I draw the rectangular window on the back of the mat board and I place the picture on this window just to double check the calculations. (Fig 7)

Figure 7

To cut the window opening in the mat, I adjust the mat guide to 2.7 inches on the scale (just like I did while cutting the straight edge), place the mat board upside down(very important), use the bevel edge cutting head, align the marking of the bevel edge cutting head with the line drawing on the mat board. (Fig 8) I push the blade down with my thumb and in one swift motion; push the cutting head from one edge of the drawn window to the other edge. (Fig 9) I repeat this for all sides, adjusting the mat guide as per the margin and at the end I have a window opening in the mat, with a bevel edge.

HE SAYS:

"Framing is a difficult process only until the time you know what is involved."

Figure 8

Figure 9

With the mat still upside down, I place my print on the mat, use a repositionable acid free tape in the tape dispenser and tape down the edges of the print to the mat board. (Fig 10) I turn the mat board and verify the alignment of the picture in the window. If required the

Figure 10

picture can be repositioned for alignment. Once the picture is perfectly aligned, I use a permanent matting tape and apply the tape on the outer edges of the mat board. Very carefully aligning the backing board to the mat board I place the backing board on the mat board. (Fig 11) To inspect for trapped air bubbles I turn around the mat board and if I notice any air bubbles I smooth it out. Then I apply a gentle pressure on the mat window for the print to attach to the backing board and then apply a gentle pressure on the outer edge of the mat for the mat to attach to the backing board. At this point I have a matted print. (Fig 12)

Figure 11

Figure 12

To frame this matted print, I take the frame, remove the frame backing, clean the glass, place the matted print, place the frame backing and secure the frame back to the frame. My picture is now framed. (Fig13 and 14.)

Figure 13

Figure 14

HEAR YE !

"Notice that I used a standard sized ready made frame. For most of my pictures I find that a standard size frame works. The key is to have the outer dimension of the mat board in a standard size to fit a standard size frame. Then a smaller size window can be cut in this mat board and the picture can be matted and framed.

The downfall of this method is that you are restricted in the choice of margins. For complete freedom over the choice of mat size and the margin you would need a custom frame. What I do in such situations is to order the parts of the frame from an online store and assemble the frame myself. I order two pair of sides, one for the width and one for the height, the glass and the required hardware assembly kit. These frame sides come mitered and I all I have to do is to put the sides together and attach them using the assembly hardware kit I had ordered. It really is as easy as plug and play."

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

PHOTOSHOPOGRAPHY:

Masking for Contrast Control

Article and Photography ©:Ron Bigelow

BY RON BIGELOW

One of the main tasks in image editing is to manage contrast. Images with contrast problems are generally not very appealing. Specifically, in images with too much contrast, the high level of contrast tends to draw the attention of the viewer to the contrast and away from the main point of interest. This lessens the impact of the image. This article covers one tool that can be used to manage the contrast in high contrast images

Creating the Image

Figure 1: *Image with contrast issues*

Figure 1 shows an image with contrast issues. The image contains both the sky, which is very bright and vegetation that is in the shadows. The exposure was set to keep the detail in the sky. As a consequence, the vegetation in the shadows is too dark and has poor detail. It is desirable to lighten the shadow areas without lightening the sky. This is easily done by the use of a mask that is created specifically to manage the contrast.

This particular image was shot in raw, so the process will be described for a raw image. The process can also be used for images that were not shot in raw. At the end of this article, the changes in the process that are required for non-raw images will be discussed (the changes are very minimal).

This technique require five steps:

1. Create the original image that maintains detail in the highlights.
2. Create a new channel based on the contrast in the image.
3. Create a second copy of the image that has detail in the shadows.
4. Use the new channel to create a mask for the second copy of the image.
5. Fine tune the image.

Create the Original Image

The image is opened in Camera Raw by choosing File/Open and selecting the file from the Open Menu (any other raw converter can also be used if the photographer so chooses). Figure 2 shows the image displayed in Camera Raw (this article assumes that the reader knows how to use Camera Raw). For the first copy of the image, the image is adjusted to keep detail in the highlights (for this particular image, the automatic settings work just fine).

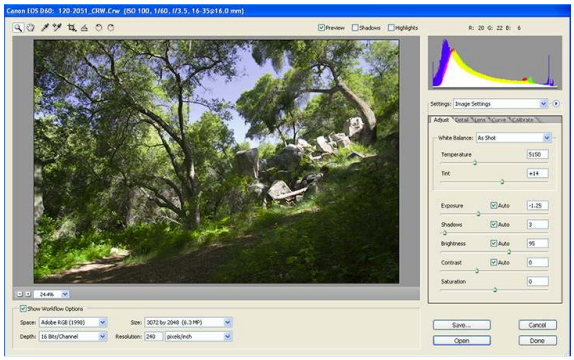


Figure 2: *Image in Camera RAW with auto settings*

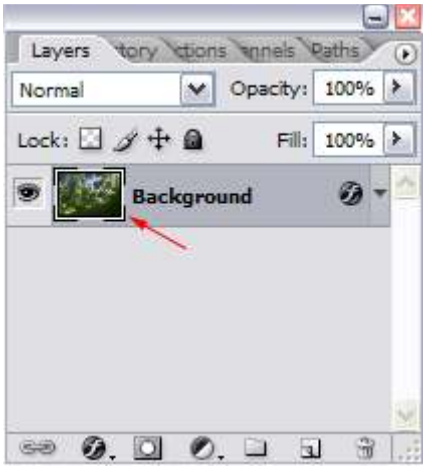


Figure 3: *Image in Layers Palette*

Clicking OK opens the image in the Layers palette (see Figure 3).

EXCERPTS:

"One of the main tasks in image editing is to manage contrast. Images with contrast problems are generally are not very appealing. Specifically, in images with too much contrast, the high level of contrast tends to draw the attention of the viewer to the contrast and away from the main point of interest. This lessens the impact of the image"

Figure 4: *Channels Palette*

Create a new channel based on the contrast of the image

The next step is to create a new channel that is based on the contrast in the image. This channel will later be used to create a mask that will be utilized to control the contrast in the image. For this, the Channels palette is selected. The Channels palette is shown in Figure 4. If not already selected, the RGB channel is selected. A selection of the entire image is created by choosing Select/Select All. The image is now copied by choosing Edit/Copy. A new channel is created by clicking on the Create new channel icon at the bottom of the Channels palette (see Figure 5). The new channel will automatically be labeled as the Alpha 1 channel. The channel should be renamed the Contrast channel. The image is now pasted into the Contrast channel by selecting that channel and choosing Edit/Paste. Next, it is necessary to invert the black and white image by choosing Image/ Adjustments/ Invert. The Channels Palette at this point is shown in Figure 6.

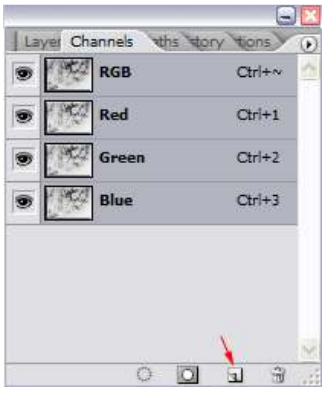


Figure 5: *Create new channel icon on Channels Palette*

Figure 6: *Channels Palette with the inverted contrast channel*

The Contrast channel is shown in Figure 7. It is important to understand what has been done up to this point. The Contrast channel is now a black and white copy of the original image except that the tonal values have been inverted. In other words, the dark areas are now light, and the light areas are now dark. In essence, the contrast of the Contrast channel has been inverted from that of the original image.

Figure 7: *Contrast Channel*

Create a Second Copy of the Image that has Detail in the Shadows.

We now go back to the raw converter. The image is, again, opened in Camera Raw (or some other raw converter) by choosing File/Open and selecting the file from the Open Menu. The point of this second conversion is to lighten the shadows so that we can get more detail in the shadows and reduce the image contrast. For this purpose, the Exposure control is adjusted to increase the brightness of the image. At this point, it is okay if the image looks too bright, it will be fine tuned later. Figure 8 shows the image displayed in Camera Raw with the exposure control set to lighten the image.

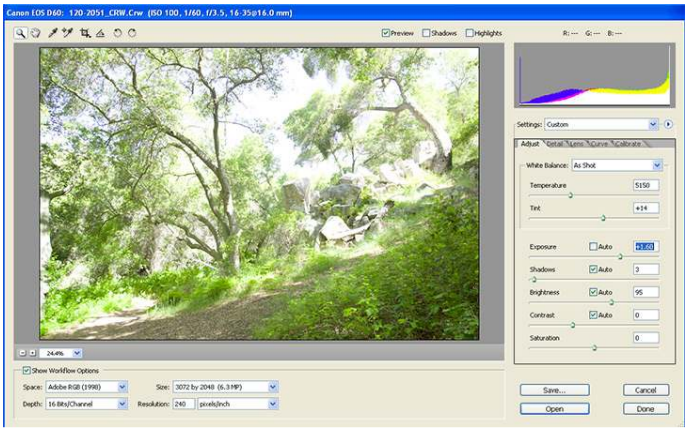


Figure 8: *Image in Camera Raw with exposure control set to Lighten the image*

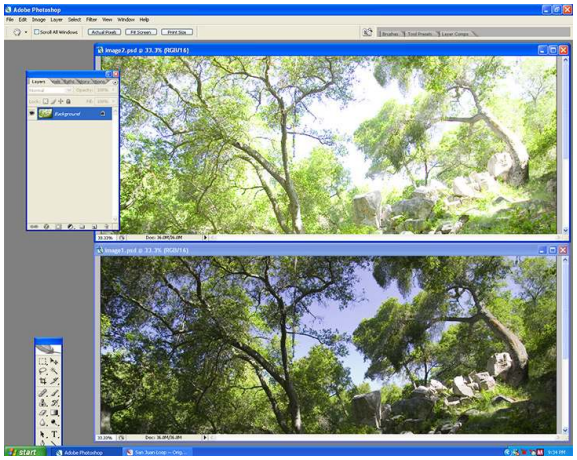


Figure 9: *Both images open*

There are now two images open in the image editing program as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 10: *toolbar*

Image2 is now added to Image 1 by the following steps:

1. The Layers palette must be open in both images.
2. The Move tool is chosen from the Tools Palette (see Figure 10).
3. Image two is selected.
4. The Background layer in the Layers Palette is selected.
5. While holding down the Shift key, the Background layer for Image 2 is dragged over Image 1 and released.
6. Image 2 will be labeled as Layer 1 in the file that it has been transferred. Rename the layer as the Shadow layer.
7. Image 2 is closed.

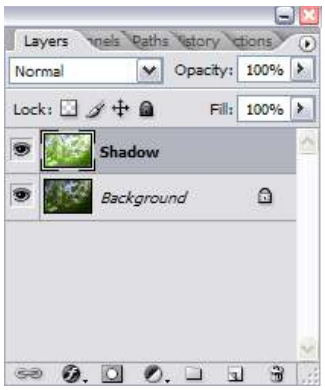


Figure 11: *Layers palette with both images*

Now, both images are in the same file, and the Layers palette looks like Figure 11.

Figure 12: *Image with shadow layer on top*

The image now looks as shown in Figure 12. The image looks overly bright because the Shadow layer is on top.

Use the new channel to create a mask for the second copy of the image

The Contrast channel is now used to create a mask that will be used on the Shadow Layer. For this step, we head back to the Channels palette. With the Contrast channel selected, a selection is created by clicking on the Load channel as selection icon at the bottom of the Channels palette (see Figure 13).

A selection has now been created based on the Contrast channel. Since the Contrast channel was inverted, in this selection, the dark areas of the Background layer are selected and the light areas are not.

Figure 14: *Image with selection*

Before the selection can be used, it must be blurred a bit to soften the edges so that the mask that will be created from the selection will blend the two layers together smoothly. The selection is blurred by moving into Quick Mask Mode by clicking on Edit in Quick Mask Mode on the Tools palette (see Figure 15). Figure 16 shows the image in Quick Mask Mode.

Figure 15: *Edit in quick mask mode on the tools palette*

Figure 16: *Image in quick mask mode*

The actual blurring is executed by choosing Filter/Blur/Gaussian Blur. This brings up the Gaussian Blur menu as shown in Figure 17.

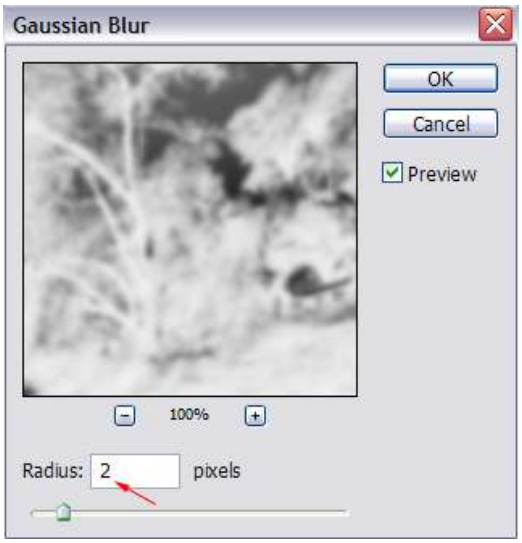


Figure 17: *Gaussain blur menu*

The only setting on the Gaussian Blur menu is the radius. The larger the radius, the greater the blurring. For this technique, only a small amount of blurring is required; a radius setting of two was chosen for this image. Clicking OK blurs the mask.

Figure 18

Clicking on Edit in Standard Mode on the Tools palette (see Figure 18) moves the image out of Quick Mask mode.

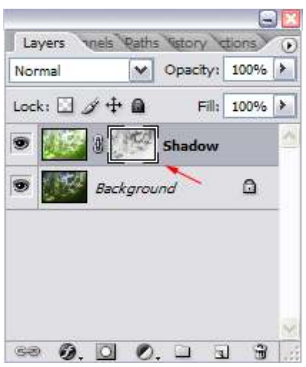


Figure 19: *Layers palette with mask on shadow layer*

The selection is now ready to be used to create a mask. With the Shadow layer selected, the mask is added by choosing Layer/Layer Mask/Reveal Selection. Figure 19 shows the Layers palette with the mask added to the Shadow layer. Figure 20 shows the image.

Figure 20: *Image after the mask is added to the shadow layer*

Obviously, Figure 20 doesn't look all that appealing. Not to worry, In the last step, the image will be fine tuned.

Fine tune the image

It is important at this point to understand what has been created. The Background layer is the layer with which we started. It has good detail in the highlights, but the shadows are too dark and the overall contrast of the image is too great. The Shadow layer was deliberately created as a lighter version of the image in order to bring out the shadow detail. The key to getting a photo with good overall detail is the mask on the Shadow layer. This mask was created to have the tonal values inverted from the Background layer. Thus, this mask is light where the Background layer is dark and dark where Background layer is light. Consequently, the mask allows the lighter Shadow layer to show in the shadow areas (where the Background layer is dark), and allows the darker Background layer to show in the highlight areas (where the Background layer is light). In short, we get the shadow detail from the lighter Shadow layer and the highlight detail from the darker Background layer. The result is an image with detail in both the shadows and the highlights.

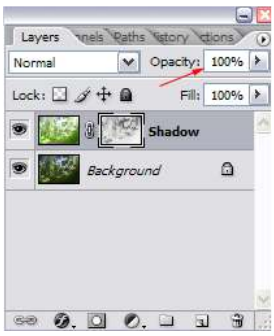


Figure 21: *Opacity adjustments*

There are two primary methods of fine tuning the image. The first method is to adjust the Opacity of the Shadow layer (see Figure 21). By moving the Opacity to 21% (for this particular image; other images will use different Opacity settings), the image is improved. Figures 22 and 23 show the original image vs. the reworked image with the Opacity of the Shadow layer set at 21%.

Figure 22: *Original Image*

Figure 23: *Reworked image with shadow layer opacity set at 21%*

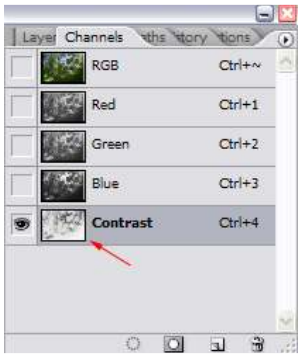


Figure 24: *Channels palette*

This is an improvement. However, I would like to bring out the shadows in the lower right hand corner a little bit more. This can be done by increasing the Opacity. However, areas in the trees are already too light. Increasing the Opacity would make them even lighter. This is not acceptable. What I want to do is leave the lightest areas of the mask alone, but darken the darker parts somewhat. After this is done, I will increase the Opacity of the Shadow layer. All of this can be done with the second method of fine tuning.

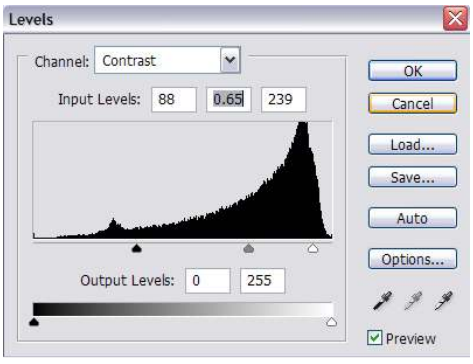


Figure 25: *Levels*

The second method of fine tuning the mask involves editing the Contrast Channel. Going back to the Channels palette (see Figure 24) allows the Contrast channel to be selected. Levels can now be used to edit the Contrast channel by choosing Image/ Adjustments /Levels. Figure 25 shows the Levels menu. Moving the black input slider inward darkens the darker parts of the mask but leaves the lighter parts relatively unaffected (this will darken the lighter tones in the reworked image a little bit). The White input slider and the middle input slider were also adjusted slightly to achieve the desired tonal balance in the Contrast channel.

Figures 26 shows the original Contrast channel, and Figure 27 shows the channel after the Levels adjustment.

The mask that is currently on the Shadow layer will need to be deleted and a new mask applied using the same procedure as before.

Figure 26: *Original contrast channel*

Figure 27: *Contrast channel after levels adjustment*

Once the new mask is created, the Opacity is increased to 37% (on this particular image; other images will require different Opacity settings).

Figures 28 -- 30 compare the original image with the two reworked images. Figure 28 shows the original image. Figure 29 shows the image with the first mask. Figure 30 shows the image after the Contrast channel was modified with Levels and a new mask created. In these small, web images, the differences between the two images with the masks are subtle, but there is more detail in the shadows on the lower right hand side with the new mask. In a large print, the difference would be much more noticeable.

EXCERPTS:

…I would like to bring out the shadows […] a little bit more – this can be done by increasing the Opacity […] However, increasing the opacity would make the lighter parts even lighter. This is not acceptable. All of this can be done with the second method of fine tuning "

"The second method of fine tuning the mask involves editing the Contrast Channel. Going back to the Channels palette (see Figure 24) allows the Contrast channel to be selected. Levels can now be used to edit the Contrast channel by choosing Image/ Adjustments /Levels…"

Figure 28: *Original Image*

Figure 29: *Image with first mask*

Figure 30: *Image after constrast channel was modified with levels and a new mask created*

The work performed so far has been done only to handle the contrast of the image. Further editing is required for a finished image.
After additional editing, the final image was created and can be seen directly below.

Hey, What if You're Not Using Raw?

If you are not using raw, the only thing that changes is that the Shadow layer is created by duplicating the Background layer. This layer is then lightened by using Brightness/Contrast. This is done instead of using the raw converter.

Figure 31: *San Juan loop trail*

Summary

Once mastered, this tool is simple, quick, and easy, but it can produce great results. It's a good tool to have in your toolbox.

EXCERPTS:

"If you are not using raw, the only thing that changes is that the Shadow layer is created by duplicating the Background layer"

"Once mastered, this tool is simple, quick, and easy, but it can produce great results. It's a good tool to have in your toolbox"

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

GEAR-TALK

THE JOURNEY FROM:35mm to Medium Format

© Oleg Shpak

Born in Russia, in 1968, Oleg Moiseyenko's earliest photographic experience came from observing the magnificent scenery of high-mountain worlds while traveling with his geologist parents. His formal education (Masters in Mathematics and Computer Science) and passion for discovering new places lead him to the US, where he settled in 1999, working as an IT professional. He feels that traveling and experiencing various cultures is a tremendous source of informal education. Oleg is an active member of several photographic societies: the Princeton (NJ) and Newtown (PA) photo clubs, and the American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP). His works have been exhibited at the Trenton City Museum, New Jersey and other juried shows and contests. Oleg resides with his wife, Irene, and daughter Stacy in Plainsboro, New Jersey.

[Editor's Note: The small thumbnail images do not do real justice to the exceptionally crisp quality of the Rollei Digital Bundle. Please visit Oleg's galleries for larger sized images.]

The Passion

I became interested in photography a long time ago while capturing the amazing landscapes around me on slide film. Together with my parents, both geologists, and an old Russian film camera I used to travel a great deal across wonderful mountain regions of Middle Asia. Twenty-five years had past since then, and only several boxes full of faded rolls of film left - what a pity! The brilliant ice covered mountain ridges, beautiful and rich in colorful wild flowers, indigo skies – everything faded and can no longer be compared to their "originals" which are still fresh in my memory. In an attempt to preserve the original brilliance

Ultra-real abstraction

and color of the images I turned to the digital photography. My background in computer science also helped me to embrace this process.

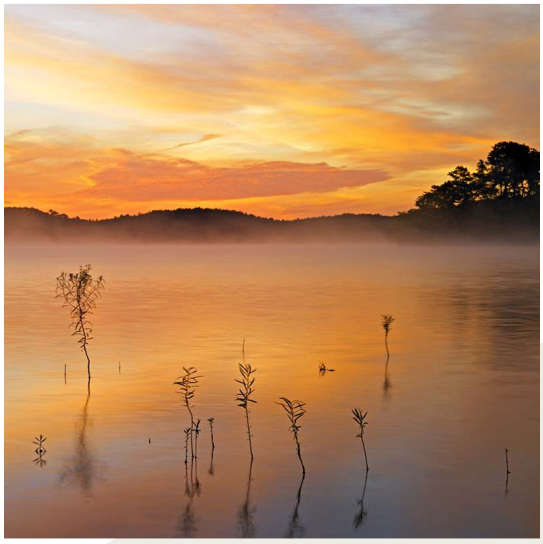
Foray into Digital

My first digital camera was a Nikon D100. It was carefully picked out of a great number of cameras available on the market at the time. An immediate result of my introduction to the world of digital photography was an urgent need to learn a bunch of new skills. The use of the Photoshop program was one of the most challenging ones. However, with some practice and constant fiddling around with my Nikon, I soon overcame the obstacles and began to see the results.

Agencies lust for mega-pixels !

Two years had gone by. Suddenly, I realized that the 6 Mpx limit of my camera prevented me from further growth as a professional photographer. I wanted to sell my images, and it was very discouraging to hear from various agencies that, although, they did like my work, they could not utilize the images due to their low resolution. It was clear to me that I needed to upgrade my equipment. Around the same time I noticed that I tended to crop my images square. The most logical solution was to find a medium format (MF) digital camera with a square matrix. Canon EOS 1Ds Mark was another option, however, I decided against it based on several critical points, which I will discuss in this article a little later. I spent a few months in attempts to find a MF system that would satisfy the following basic requirements:

- digital workflow
- square format
- sharp optics
- good ergonomics and design



Smooth waters a-la Chinese silk painting

ROLLEI ENVY:

The rain is coming

Rollei 6008i top view

A Waltz zone

"I realized that the 6 Mpx limit of my camera prevented me from further growth as a professional photographer. I wanted to sell my images, and it was very discouraging to hear from various agencies that, although, they did like my work, they could not utilize the images due to their low resolution"

I had two potential candidates in mind: Hasselblad and Rollei. Both were traditional film cameras and needed to be combined with a digital back to satisfy the digital workflow requirement. There was plenty of information available about Hasselblad cameras. Researching about Rollei equipment proved to be a challenge. Even more challenging was to locate any information about a Rollei camera body with an integrated Phase One digital back.

The Quest for Medium Format

I started my research with the Phase One Official User to User Forum (http://forum.phaseone.com/). Then I was put in touch with a Rollei dealer in UK, who, in turn, connected me with a Rollei representative in the US. Luckily for me, the Rollei Digital Bundle (Rolleiflex 6008 AF camera + Phase One P20 digital back) solution was introduced to the market shortly after I launched my quest for a MF camera.

© Jens Kollmorgen

Finally, I began gathering information I was looking for. Soon enough I was armed with plenty of facts to be able to make a right comparison between Hasselblad 555 ELD and Rollei 6008 AF (both with a Phase One digital back in mind).

Both the Rolleiflex and the Hasselblad solutions had what I was looking for: a modular approach and an overall excellent quality the mechanics/optics. However, the Rolleiflex offered an autofocus, better ergonomics and several other valuable features. Last but not least, Rolleiflex was cheaper, therefore, enabling me to get more for a lesser price. I chose Rolleiflex.

Welcoming a new member in the family

Finally my dreams came true! I purchased the Rollei Digital Bundle and immediately fell in love with it. I was really surprised with the

Rollei 6008 AF with Metz flash, lens and hood

packaging. It came in a huge box (like if there were a 17" CRT monitor inside.) When I unpacked the box, I realized why it was so big - the P20 came in a black plastic case which included the digital back itself, some documentation, a charger, a set of two Li-ion batteries, an international set of power

Phase One digital back close-up

adaptors, two bottles of cleaning solution (very convenient - thank you, Phase One!), and an opal calibrating plate.

The Experience: The Good and the Bad

After several months of working with the camera I am pleased to confirm results of my initial research - this system rocks in terms of quality and price/performance ratio! Let me highlight some features of Rollei Digital Bundle, which I value the most:

- *Square format:* it is a personal preference, of course, but thanks to this feature I do not need to even think which layout of my images, horizontal or vertical, is most suitable for a particular situation.
- *Amazingly sharp autofocus lens optics* (Schneider Xenotar 80mm f/2.8 HFT AF)*:* it is so sharp that I find myself rarely using post-processing sharpening tool in Photoshop now ; the level of details is simply amazing – I have yet to see anything better! After all, it is not that difficult to make

Ghost Town

Rollei 6008AF with hand grip

The Lily Belle

"…Schneider Xenotar 80mm f/2.8 HFT AF): it is so sharp that I find myself rarely using post-processing sharpening tool in Photoshop now; the level of details is simply amazing – I have yet to see anything better!"

an image look softer if needed, while making a soft image sharper is virtually impossible.

- *Beautifully bright and large chimney viewfinder:* it is self-explanatory.
- *Good logic in controls placement, excellent build quality and clean design:* it is all about Germans!
- *True 16-bit color depth:* thanks to a Kodak chip inside, images are rich in colors and additional color correction is rarely needed.
- *12 f-stops dynamic range*: it was really difficult to keep highlights under control with my old friend D100. I feel liberated now. In addition, the shadows have much more details and a very smooth tone gradation.
- *Low level of noise:* again, thanks to the Phase One's Kodak chip.
- *Capture One software (Also a Phase One product and comes with the digital back):* simply the best in terms of quality and very convenient in digital workflow when working with a RAW file format conversions.
- *Shooting speed:* thanks to a very fast P20 system, the camera can take up to 45 frames per minute and each of them is 96MB in size (after RAW to TIFF conversion).
- *Easy set up*– just open the boxes, put all the parts together and you are ready to go shooting!

Of course, my Rolleiflex has some drawbacks that I had to accept:

- *1.5 crop factor:* I would say it is the major weakness of this system – in a nutshell, not everything you see in 60x60 mm viewfinder reaches the 37x37mm digital chip.
- *Price:* It bites!– While the initial price of this bundle ($16,000) came down to 12-13K , it is still, damn, high!
- *Autofocus*: it is not always accurate in difficult lighting situations.

I was always fond of the classical approaches in photography and rarely traveled without a heavy and stable tripod, large lenses and a backpack full of additional accessories. I was used to carrying around a hefty load for weeks. Although, after the conversion to the MF, an overall weight and physical dimensions increase of my equipment was expected. I still remember, when for the first time I picked up my Rollei, fully loaded with a lens, a digital back, a flash, two batteries, and a handle grip – it was heavy! Somehow, I liked it though. After all, it was a medium format system, right?

I found a few other imperfections that were not obvious at the beginning and required some level of familiarity with system in order to be discovered. One of them was the lack of a complete integration between the digital back and the camera (i.e., image EXIF data did not show shutter speed and aperture settings). I also thought that the Capture One software graphical user interface could be improved. Last, but not least, I did believe that Phase One could improve their User Manual as well.

Rollei Digital Bundle vs. EOS-1Ds Mark II

As I mentioned earlier, the only worthwhile 35mm alternative to converting to a MF camera was to purchase a 16Mpx Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II. No doubt, 1Ds MKII is the best digital camera currently available *in its own class*! This lovely system, beautifully designed by Canon, would be my primary choice for 35mm photography; however, my heart is set for the square format. In my humble opinion, there are a few other disadvantages that the Canon 1Ds MKII system has:

- Even the best Canon prime lenses on 1Ds MKII are not quite equal to the Schneider/ Carl-Zeiss optics in combination with Phase One back's Kodak chip;
- Slightly narrower dynamic range (about 10 vs. 12 f-stops) in compared to the Phase One digital backs;
- 12-bit color depth RAW Canon files vs. true 16-bit RAW files of Phase One;
- Shadow reproduction ability is not quite equal to P20;
- Obvious inability to convert the system from digital to film, while Rolleiflex 6008 AF camera from the Rollei Digital Bundle is still able to do so – just swap digital back with a film one. This would serve as perfect backup solution in the middle of nowhere!

There were also several other, a little subjective and not strictly technical preferences of mine: better color reproduction and a more

Sisters

© Jens Kollmorgen

Mood Damask

"Even the best Canon prime lenses on 1Ds MKII are not quite equal to the Schneider/ Carl-Zeiss optics in combination with Phase One back's Kodak chip;"

Rollei Digital Bundle

Christmas cards for the little ones

professional look and feel of the Rolleiflex system. The only feature of Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II I wish to see with Rollei is its weatherproof body design.

Any digital medium format system like the Rollei Digital Bundle or the Hasselblad H1/H2 is geared towards professional use. For a number of amateur photographers a $12,000-$15,000 investment would seem like a fortune. However, if one were serious about further endeavors in the field of commercial photography, such a sum could be easily justified with a fairly quick return on investments by means of the increased specter of possible utilization of the images. Personally, I found that as soon as I started shooting with my digital Rollei, the previous problem with stock agencies regarding the low image resolution has disappeared. All of the stock agencies that I am currently working with happily accept the 96MB TIFF (48 bit RGB) files that come out of my Rollei.

Certainly even professional photographic equipment cannot perform well on its own. Obtaining the right accessories is crucial to guarantee the best results. Due to the significant weight of a fully equipped MF camera the most important one is a sturdy support system - Gitzo 1325 carbon fiber tripod with Arca-Swiss Monoball B1 ballhead and a lever release clamp

Troubled Water

from Really Right Staff are my choices. A powerful Metz 54MZ-4 shoe mount flash (combined with Rollei SCA 3562 TTL adapter) ensures a perfect illumination and an excellent color reproduction. A few other small items are always in my camera bag: B+W filters, Rollei extension tubes, a lens hoods, spare batteries, a battery box with a power interface, an electronic cable release (Rollei RC-120) and a CompactFlash media card holder. This list is not complete yet and surely will grow in accord with my professional needs. The next most likely addition will be the ingenious Schneider Apo-Symmar 90 mm f/4 HFT PQS or the Carl-Zeiss Makro-Planar 4/120 mm lens, which would be perfect for portrait and macro applications (with extension tubes) as well, which should be released by Rollei in the nearest future.

Overall, the Rollei Digital Bundle is an excellent strategic choice, if you have decided to shoot MF for the rest of your life. I am convinced that the Rollei will continue to follow the same successful strategy: a square format, precision Schneider optics and a modular design in conjunction with a high resolution digital backs with very little or *zero* (I hope!) crop-factor. The famous backward compatibility of the Rollei systems will insure that any additions to my equipment in future will work well with the older pieces too.

Conclusion

In summary, I really like this system from Rollei and truly believe it is the best digital system in the MF class. It's built to last and is capable of delivering many thousands of wonderful images.

The following URL links would provide you with more specific technical details about the Rolleiflex 6008 AF medium format camera, the Rollei Digital Bundle and the full line of digital backs from Phase One:

Rollei International
Rollei USA
Phase One Official Web site
Phase One Official User Forum
Schneider- Kreuznach official web-site
Rob Galbriath Medium Format Forum

Please feel free to email at omoiseyenko-pbase@yahoo.com with any of your questions or comments regarding the subject of this article. I would be glad to answer them all to the best of my ability.

Credits

In Russia, there is a saying: *a shoemaker wears no shoes!* That's why I approached my friends for some of the pictures and helping me with this article.

I would like to thank those people, who contributed to the drafting of this article. First of all, my friend Svetlana Kirpichenko - for helping me brain-storm and proof-read my writing. Secondly, my fellow photographer Oleg Shpak - for donating my portrait to illustrate this piece. Also, Erik de Goederen, the photographer, Holland and Dietmar Kanzer, Head of Rollei GmbH Marketing, Germany for providing their extensive knowledge of the Rollei equipment.

A few words on the art of fishing

Old Faithful

Office Night

Rollei factory in Braunschweig Salzdahlumerstrasse 196.
© Manfred Zimmermann

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

TRAVEL REPORT: Italy Bellisimo !

Neil Buchan-Grant has been an enthusiastic amateur photographer for over 20 years. In recent years he has had work published in both magazies and books, and since winning a travel photography competition in 2004 he has started to market his work to the travel trade and the publishing sector. Although he runs a successful graphics company based in York England, he intends to produce more comissioned work and stock travel images in the years to come. Neil shoots entirely digital, favouring fast prime lenses and available light.

In 2004 I travelled with my wife to Italy's glamorous Amalfi coast for our summer vacation. The trip was a photographer's dream, starting in Sorrento moving on to Capri, Positano and then finally Naples. I had been to Italy before but nothing quite prepared me for this visual feast.

We had pushed the boat out and for the first time, we were staying in "five star" hotels. The thing I was soon to discover about these establishments is that they usually have the most spectacular locations. On the evening of our first day in Sorrento, I popped out to the expansive, high level terrace of our hotel. It was just before sunset and the terrace gave spectacular views of both the twinkling port below and the highly recognisable peninsula. I shot away like a kid in a toy shop. When my wife joined me 30 minutes later it was almost dark, but the sky still displayed the most intense swathe of red and orange. Then, a massive cruise liner silently drifted by, it was lit up like a Christmas tree and seemed quite surreal, I looked round and my wife was in tears! The reason this, normally well composed, Yorkshire-woman was reduced to rubble was simply the overwhelming beauty of the sight before us.

The next morning, the same viewpoint looking down over the port with Vesuvius in the distance, gave me the first of the three pictures which won the "Independent Newspaper/Insight/Berlitz Guides" 2004 travel photography competition. The shot was taken through a Singh-Ray blue/gold polariser at 24mm.

Looking down over the port with Vesuvius in the distance

The second shot was initially "seen" in one of those unique open-top "Capri taxis" travelling back up from the town to our hotel after dinner. Looking back towards the town, a full moon lit up the sea which lay behind the lights of Capri. It was breathtaking! When we arrived back at the hotel it was midnight, I grabbed my tripod and camera and jumped in the taxi to go straight back to the viewpoint. The first of 6 long exposures was the best of the bunch.

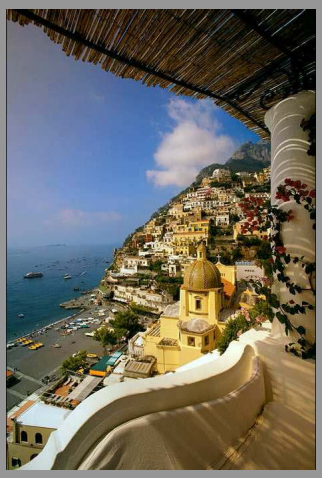
Capri, lit by a full moon as seen from the unique open-top Capri Taxis

The last shot was a perfect example of why we should always carry "some kind" of camera. We were on our last day in Naples and spending some time at a Private Beach Club recommended to us by the concierge. There wasn't so much of a beach but the large sandstone platforms were stunning, nonetheless. I had left the 1Ds at the hotel but fortunately I had my little Canon Ixus which I used to shoot the overhead view of the Neopolitan sunbathers.

Private Beach Club in Naples

SIDEBAR:

"In 2004 I travelled with my wife to Italy's glamorous Amalfi coast for our summer vacation. The trip was a photographer's dream, starting in Sorrento moving on to Capri, Positano and then finally Naples. I had been to Italy before but nothing quite prepared me for this visual feast."



A view of positano from the restaurant of La Sirenuse

A side street in Taormina, Sicily

The prize was a commission to shoot one of the Berlitz travel guides in 2005. When the call came through, I couldn't belive my luck, it was to be "Genoa & The Itallian Riviera"!

I had about 4 weeks to organise the trip. I say "trip" but in fact I made two trips: the first flying into Nice and driving up to Genoa and the second flying into Pisa and staying in Ortofino and Lerici. I was supplied with a shoot list, the itinerary seemed daunting and frenetic! The picture editor said I was "pushing it" to try and shoot this in 2 weeks. She was right, the pace was not what I had envisaged. Although it was a highly enjoyable experience, I was always up against the clock every day. It wasn't like a holiday, there was just about enough time for a quick gasp at the sight before you, before photographing it and then it was on to the next town! In two weeks I learned to drive and park "like an Italian".

Carrying all the gear I 'initially' thought was necessary to do the job right, was in itself, quite a task. The routine was usually to walk to the highest point in the town or village where the best church, castle or view would be. With a temperature of 38 degrees, high humidity and a backpack full of glass, I was getting a highly efficient and unexpected workout! I quickly tailored my kit down to just a Canon 1Ds with a Canon 16-35mm, a 24-70mm and a 70-200mm. The camera was hung on one of those excellent stretchy Optech Pro Straps and also had the hand strap. The lenses not being used were carried on a very comfortable Lowepro Belt. When I knew I would be going indoors to shoot, I would take along a 20D and a 35mm f1.4 lens, this provided incredible high ISO, low light opportunities within dingy museums and churches.

To have any chance of shooting most of the locations on the list, I had to be up before dawn and I usually stopped shooting as the sun hit the water. It was a punishing schedule made even more improbable by a bout of "pasta belly" after a quite excellent dinner in San Remo. This setback knocked nearly a day off the time available. With some careful re-prioritising and an extra night in one hotel, I was soon back on course. Violent thunderstorms then materialised to spoil one afternoon, although this did at least bring out the many interesting characters who sell umbrellas! The region of Liguria had many highlights. Photographically, Genoa and Portofino stood out for me. Genoa was a massive city with fantastic buildings and a seriously cultured atmosphere. It had stunning historic cathedrals and monuments, contrasted with it's rejuvinated port area which had a modern cosmopolitan feel. On the second day in Genoa I was walking through the old streets looking for a specific church when things seemed to suddenly go quiet. I had walked into what at first seemed like a residential area but soon revealed itself as a place of "significant business". It was only 2pm in the afternoon but increasingly, each doorway and alley I passed had some buxom, smoking, leggy woman touting for business. This area I soon discovered, became the town's principal red light area between the hours of 2pm and 4pm each day. I managed to sneak a shot of a portly chap inspecting the wares of a mature, buxom lady with powerful looking thighs!

Ceiling Fresco in Genoa's Palazzo Rosso

"touting for business" in Genoa

A view over the Alps en route to Venice

"… in two weeks I learned to drive and park "like an Italian".

Genoa's modernised "Porto Antico" area

"The region of Liguria had many highlights. Photographically, Genoa and Portofino stood out for me. Genoa was a massive city with fantastic buildings and a seriously cultured atmosphere. It had stunning historic cathedrals and monuments, contrasted with it's rejuvinated port area which had a modern cosmopolitan feel"

Portofino was one of the most visually stunning towns I have ever seen. The buildings around the port are as Venetian as anything you will see in Venice. The town is a total "glamour-fest". Everywhere you look there are stunning women and "inferiority-complex inducing" Adonises wearing Gucci and Prada. On my first day, there was a small team doing a fashion shoot by the harbour. Berlusconi's yacht was amongst the many millionaire's gin palaces assembled in the stunning marina. If you ever want to see what "seriously rich" people look like, this is the place to find out. It's a photographic paradise, beautiful buildings, beautiful boats, beautiful people. I got a lucky shot of a trendy looking couple on a moped, they spotted me

"Getting the glare" in Portofino

shooting and she gave me a 'glare' from the pillion seat! The commision asked for 500 quality shots. In the end, I took nearly 4000 photos over the two weeks. I whittled these down to 640 which I supplied on a DVD. The company were very pleased with the photos and they have since asked me to take pictures for forthcoming books. I have created a website www.buchangrant.com to market travel shots from Europe, but Italy dominates the galleries. The Travel guide should be published any day now.

Feeding a duck in the Marina at Santa Margherita Ligure

San Remo – where Gucci and Prada is common place

Umbrella Salesman in Sam Remo

"I have created a website www.buchangrant.com to market travel shots from Europe, but Italy dominates the galleries. The Travel guide should be published any day now."

Portofino Harbor

The hilltop village of Baiardo

Italy really is the easiest place in the world to photograph anything! The mopeds, cars and boats are classics. The architecture is rich in both history and colour and the people are flamboyant, gregarious and pleasing to the eye! Since shooting the travel guide, I have been back to Italy twice visiting Venice and Sicily. Neither failed to impress but Venice really was everything I hoped it would be. I expected it to be busy but I was surprised how many people were carrying tripods. When I arrived at the edge of the lagoon one morning, well before dawn, there were already three photographers there before me, we had to form an orderly queue to shoot on the jetty! In Venice I was trying out my new camera, a Canon 5D and I had decided to leave the zooms at home and take only fast prime lenses. The 5D was much easier to carry around than the 1Ds and had the added benefit of being far less conspicuous, I prefer to blend in with the crowd. The combination of high ISO, fast lenses and a big sensor gave gave me some great shots and the added benefit of not having to drag my tripod into the restaurants!

One shot of a small, dimly lit bridge by night, shot handheld at 1/25, f 1.4, ISO 3200 through a 35mm lens, was recently licensed to Canon Europe to help market the 5D.

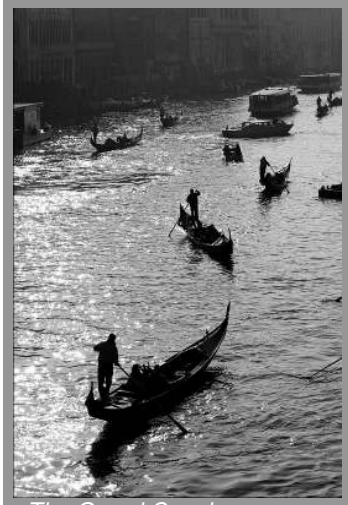
Dimlty lit bridge in Venice (licensed to Canon for 5D marketing)

There is so much variety within Europe, the photographic opportunities are endless. It offers a photographer not only vastly contrasting landscapes and climates, but an amazing range of people, each with their own unique culture and history. Nowhere is the culture and history of a nation more evident in the faces of it's people than in Italy. So often you see a face in a crowd and "you know" this person *must* be a direct descendant of "Julius Ceasar!" or "Sophia Loren!", such is their striking appearance. I have many places still to explore, but I think I'll be seeing more of Italy than most.

Two gondoliers waiting for trade to pickup

Gondolier in Venice

Local "rock-diver" watching the sunset in Cefalu, Sicily

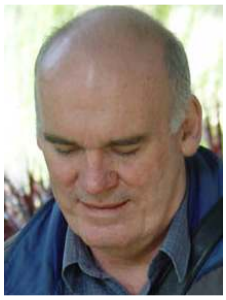


The Grand Canal, Venice

"There is so much variety within Europe, the photographic opportunities are endless"

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

CULTURE CAULDRON: China of Today

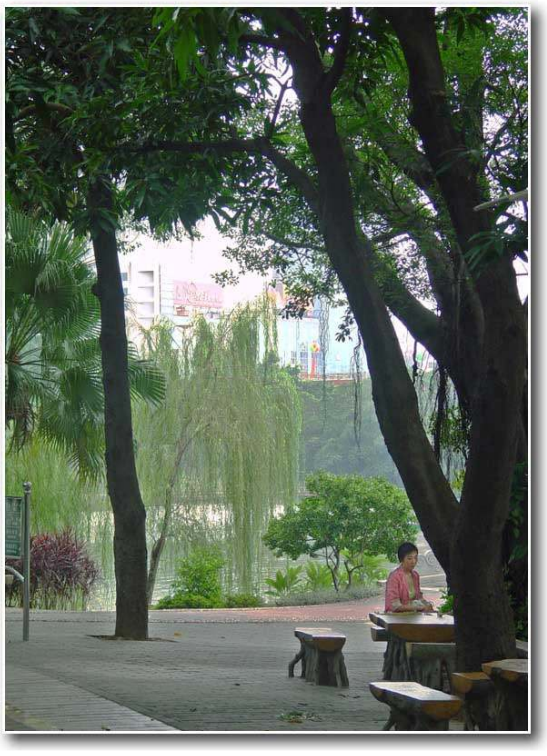


John Dunn was born in England, spent his childhood in Scotland, grew up in Canada and now lives in China. A teacher, an actor and writer, he earns his living teaching drama in a middle school in Jiangmen, Guangdong China. He dreams of being useful, creative and happy as long as he can. He loves China, all the people of the world and his Sony R1

Are you interested in China? I've lived in China for seven years now, and I find that my interest in it is growing; the longer I live here, the more I realize how little I know and understand about this huge country and its deeply rooted culture. For example, in my job as a drama teacher, I have to give my students an outline of the history of drama in Europe. I've recently discovered that drama history in China goes back further and has been more consistent than in Europe. What I don't know about this country amazes me. In eighteen years of schooling, I never studied China once.

My approach to learning about China is quite haphazard; it's neither scientific nor photo-journalistic. I think that a good photo-journalist could spend a weekend in Beijing and bring back a much more engaging exploration of the culture and the people than I can manage after all these years. For example,
http://www.luminous-landscape.com/essays/china-street.shtml
http://www.luminous-landscape.com/locations/classic-chinese.shtml
are a couple of examples from Michael Reichmann.

What I have to offer you is a few simple observations about Chinese people. They are civilized, diligent and filial.



A Civilized People

China is undergoing one of the most astonishing industrial revolutions in the history of mankind. Hundreds of millions of people are being lured from their rustic and peaceful but circumscribed lives in the country. The promise of a better life for their children, to work long, hard hours in the new factories erupting from the earth, like some bizarre volcanic activity, all along the eastern and southern Chinese coast.

Here, for example, next door to my school is the Suzuki/Haojue motorcycle factory. They have been building here on both sides of the road for two years. They are ramping up production so that they can produce three million motorcycles a year at this plant. That's one motorcycle produced every second, 24 hours a day, all year long. To move the component parts in and the motorcycles out, long blue trucks constantly fill the highways in and out of the factory. Each of the boxes on the truck contains half a dozen motorcycles packed closely together.

Suzuki/Haojue Motorcycle Factory

CHINA, 20 YEARS AGO

-A photographic gallery by

Mark Anderson (andesheng)

These images are excerpts from the galleries of Mark Anderson, who shared his memories of a China he visited in 1988.

Windows in Suzhou Canal

Dried Squid for sale in a local market

Off to the market, Kumming, China

Country house, roof decoration

CHINA, 20 YEARS AGO

CONTINUED

Mark Anderson (andesheng)

What impresses me though, is that even though major construction has been constant on both sides of the road for a good part of the two years I've lived here, (because the factory attracts housing and even a hospital, as you can see from the pictures) a lot of greenery graces both sides of the road and the median.

Although the factories are proliferating, the Chinese never forget the human need for peace and beauty. I don't know of a park that is more beautiful than Donghu Park, East Lake. In the little city of Jiangmen,

Donghu Park in Jiangmen

in Guangdong province where I live in the daytime or at night, the park offers a tranquil refuge from the noise, wind and heat of the city. Donghu Park is a miracle to me of planning and engineering. Even as a gardening feat, it's astonishing. A photographer's delight, everywhere you walk, you can find a never-ending variety of trees, plants and flowers, from the

Donghu Park in Jiangmen

exotic to the familiar.

Donghu Park is an example of China's progress allied with beauty.
6000 years of history have taught the Chinese people how to be civilized.

A Hard Working People

I read somewhere that a traveler in India can find no one who is working and a traveler in China can find no one who isn't. Despite the hyperbole, I often think that this observation, at least about China, is true. Labour is not very

A shop girl assembles a Chinese New Year decoration

expensive here, and everyone is willing to work very hard for their money, and expect to have to overcome difficulties. For example, my maid earns the equivalent of $50 US each month for cleaning, doing laundry and cooking for me. I am often tempted to pay her more, but then my Chinese colleagues tell me that she would be earning more than them, and it's not fair that a maid should earn more than a teacher.

Perhaps you think that I'm trying to rise above my station in life by having a maid, but I encountered a lot of difficulties in

A brightly dressed sweeper in Donghu Park

Six harmonies pagoda, near Hangzhou

Kindergarten Classroom

Temple Incense, Kunming

China when trying to cook for myself. For one thing, all the food containers have Chinese written on them, so it takes me a long time to figure out which is the salt and which is the sugar. I'm an extremely slow shopper here. A lot of things are sold in markets, and the stall owners bargain over the price with their customers. I've tried my best to bargain them down, but the price that a foreigner can get is not as good as the price that a local person gets. My maid actually saves me most of her salary each month by buying things at the proper price. It's also really handy to have a local person around the house to deal with trades people, plumbers and so on. I can deal with China much better when my maid helps me.

A Filial People

Most of all, I think, Chinese people love and are loyal to their family. Families exert a very strong influence over every decision in a person's life. My students always write to me about how important their family is to them. A traditional Chinese girl is very protected and very sweet.

When I first came here, I often went to English Corner, an informal gathering set up at universities, usually, for Chinese students to practice their oral English skills. I was eager to go so that I could learn about the culture from the young people directly.
When we talked about social life, and dating, I was surprised to find that most of the students claimed that they had never dated. The next question, of course, that popped into my western mind was, "Never dated? Never kissed? Most of the 22 to 24 year old girls that I met said that they were concentrating on their study. China is overpopulated. There are too many people. There is too much competition for every place at university and every job opening. Chinese students have no time for distractions. They will wait until they are working before they take a boyfriend. And yes, *they'd never been kissed*

Instead of dating, students go out together in groups. Activities are arranged for whole classes. Mountain climbing is popular.

This habit of socializing together continues into adulthood. When people want to go on a trip they go to a travel agent join a travel group. Then in a group of thirty or more strangers they will travel on the same bus, eat at the same restaurants and sleep four to a room in the same hotel. A Chinese person might find the idea of traveling alone or with just their immediate family as a lonely prospect.

A restaurant door girl gives a welcoming smile

This is a group from a university class that I met in Donghu Square. When they found I was friendly, each and every one of them wanted to pose for a photograph beside me. When they were finished I asked them all to pose for me.

A group from a university class in Donghu Square

CHINA, 20 YEARS AGO

CONTINUED

Mark Anderson (andesheng)

Three generations, Hangzhou

Alley in Shanghai

Palace Meuseum, Beijing (part of the forbidden city)

Curious girls, chinese village

Another example of how Chinese people prefer groups, is when eating. When we get food in Canada, everyone gets his own big plate full of food, but in China the big plates full of food go into the middle of the table, and everyone has a little plate or bowl from which they eat one bite at a time. In Canada, (and most places), each person has his own food, but in China, the food belongs to the group.

When Canadians first come over, they try to load up their little plate with all the food they need for the meal. Later on, hopefully they discover that there will be lots of food for them, if they can be patient and eat one morsel from each dish as they wish. The biggest cultural challenge when it comes to food, though, is breakfast. It's a totally different experience in China.

It takes a while to get used to all this different kind of food, especially at breakfast time when we are used to coffee and toast, but in fact, breakfast in China is especially delicious.

A Chinese breakfast. Clockwise from bottom left: xi fan, (rice porridge), you tiao, (doughnuts cooked in long sticks), chan fen, (stuffed gooey noodles), sauces, dan gao, (a sweet bread in a sauce), dou fu shi, (tofu cut into strips like noodles, fried and covered with sesame seeds)

Another door girl welcomes you to China

From the land of silk and sweet smiles,
I hope you enjoyed my thoughts about the Chinese people.

~ John Dunn

CHINA, 20 YEARS AGO

CONTINUED

Mark Anderson (andesheng)

Yitchang Flats, China

Stairs and Gates near Xian

Good work if you can get it:
Xian, China

Soup Seller in the market

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

PBase Corner : London PBase Meet up 2006

PBase is a wonderful virtual community for amateur photographers to share their knowledge and experiences with each other. Every once in a while, this virtual community takes a step forward to actually meet up face-face with each other to get to know the faces behind the community. This time, a group of PBase enthusiasts from the UK met up in London and spent a day full of fun and photography. Ray Pettit agreed to be our roving reporter for the day and sends in this report. Live from UK, its 'PBase PADders day out !'

Ever since I've been a member of PBase, I've always felt that it was not enough just to admire and comment on fellow photographer's work. But in reality we by and large have to accept that situation when we live hundreds, or often thousands of miles away from those artists we appreciate.

So when in December John Waine suggested a PBase meet in London, I did not hesitate to put my hand up and say 'Yes'! There had been meets in places like California, Canada and Scotland, but not yet in England which probably has the largest PBase population outside North America. Obviously I was not alone here, as by the end of the first day, seven people had shown interest, even though this would involve an overnight stay for some. Most of us who were up for the meet were probably curious to meet in real life those photographers whose work they had admired for several months. That was certainly a factor for me; it was a sort of morphing from cyberspace to reality.

With in the week, we had settled on a date – 19th February - and after some discussion a venue was firmed up too. This was all done on the PBase forum, but as finer details were worked out, we migrated to the land of e-mail. This was done in the interests of privacy, as we did not want any strange voyeurs lurking around the South Bank of the Thames that day.

Our choice of venue had to meet certain criteria. It was no use, for example, that we would say we would meet outside Big Ben at 10 o'clock. We didn't entirely know what we all looked like, especially as some of us chose a low profile in our galleries, or only chose to show off our better features! And somewhere like Big Ben is full of tourists, is at a busy junction and has no cover from the rain!

So we had to choose somewhere that was clearly identifiable, safe and sheltered from the English elements. Additionally, it shouldn't be overcrowded so we could find each other and sip that first drink in close proximity! We had soon decided to meet in a café near the London Eye along the bank of the River Thames, and one of our number circulated a photo of the location to everyone, and all we then had to do was to wait for that momentous day.

I woke up on the big day to cold grey skies, and two hours later I was being greeted by some very familiar faces, none of whom I had met before. From the 15 of us, I think I was the only one who had met any other Pbase 'stranger' before, so was not surprised at the instant familiarity that was experienced to make the day a success.

We chatted over our introductory hot chocolates and soon discovered we had a stranger in our midst; Beverley Harrison had persuaded her friend Carole Stevens to join in the fun. Poor Carole was nagged all day to sign up to PBase, especially as she appeared to be a very competent photographer armed with an impressive zoom lens and monopod. I'm glad to report that she has now joined up and is steadily building up her library of images.

© Beverley Harrison

A new word I learned at the meet was 'chimping'. Here, Bev Harrison has captured Tim Arbon, Ade Clarke, Ray Pettit and the hands of John Waine anxiously checking their photographic attempts.

© Beverly Harrison

Bev Harrison persuaded her friend Carole Stevens to attend the meet. The musical wall by the Royal Festival Hall provides the perfect backdrop to Bev's portrait of her friend, who opened her PBase account after returning home.

MANY OTHER PHOTOS AT:

The Meeting Place

PARTICIPANTS:

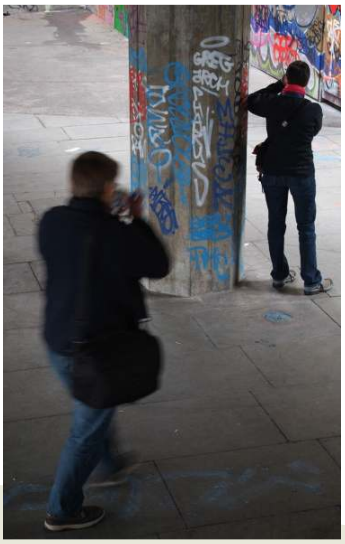
- John Waine
- Beverley Harrison
- Carole Stevens
- Sharon Rogers
- Ray Pettit
- Rosie 'floradoragirl'
- Kim Kong
- Steve H
- Ade Clarke
- Mark Rutter
- Sam Yates
- Ric Yates
- Lee Rudd
- Tim Arbon
- Gail Davison

Being such a gloomy and raw day, we had to adapt to particular styles of photography. Colourful vistas of the London skyline were out and close ups of chairs and CCTV cameras were in! As luck would have it, our café was just a few yards away from a sheltered skate board park that was illuminated by vibrant graffiti. This is just what we wanted to get us going and clicking that shutter.

© Beverly Harrison

"Lovely Old Boy" The inclement and dull weather encouraged us to seek shots under cover or close ups. One of my favourites of the day is Bev Harrison's portrait of an old gent appreciating the sounds of a string quartet playing in Covent Garden Market

As we ambled by the river, people's styles and approaches were beginning to show. Steve H was threatening to uncover most of the city's CCTV cameras on PBase, whilst Sharon Rogers holding her camera at unusual positions to get the best out of her famous wide angle lens. It also began to become apparent during our morning stroll



© Lee Rudd

Oh yes, we all wanted to photograph the same things! (photo of me stalking Gail by the skateboards!)

that photographers love to hunt solo; they cannot stay in a group for too long if they have a camera in their hand. This may have disadvantages, but the flip side seems to be that the same subject can be seen differently by different people, and this was even proven by our various shots of an attractive stack of chairs!

We had arranged to return to the café at lunchtime, and we did so not just for refreshment, but also to catch up with anybody who could not make the 10am start, especially as the majority of people lived 100 miles or so outside London. Following lunch, we had our full compliment and set off to find a location for that obligatory group shot. We decided on a large mirror not far from Waterloo station, and this turned out to be quite a hoot and was the defining moment of the meet for many. It was certainly interesting to observe not only the reactions of passers-by as we all clicked our shutters, but also of our party as they jockeyed for position with their different lenses. Once again, being photographers, we weren't like obedient schoolchildren on a trip and I'm not sure if any of our shots at the mirror include all 15 us!

© Lee Rudd

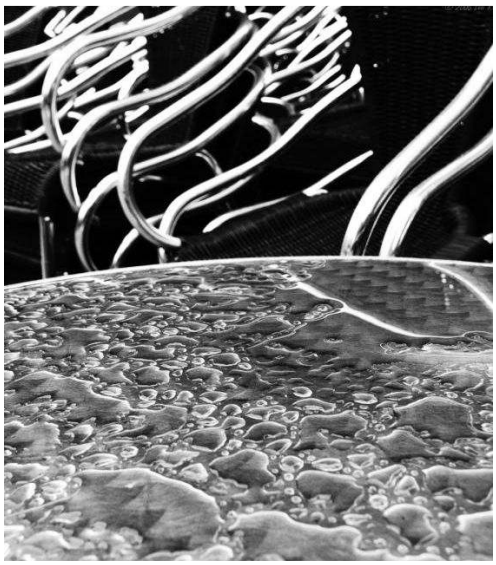
London's South Bank provides many photo opportunities, and is well known for its street performers and other interesting folk. This war victim caught the attention of both Bev and Carole as John Waine looked on

Later on, we migrated to Covent Garden and the surrounding streets as the skies darkened even more and increasing amounts of moisture fell from the sky. Here again we split up, but this time wondering where the others had got to! The photo opportunities really were scarcer by this point, but Beverley Harrison secured one of the best of the weekend when she asked for 'A Lovely Old Boy' for his portrait as he whiled away his afternoon listening to a string quartet.

A fascinating day had come to an end, and I found myself make a lonely trip to Waterloo to catch the train home, and I suppose like others was reflecting on the experience. John Waine told me afterwards how inspirational it had been to see others at play – he saw at first hand how fellow photographers saw subject matter that would have otherwise been passed by, and noted the various styles

we had developed. Sharon Rogers made a point close to my heart by saying that she could photograph things like interesting drainpipes in our company, which may not have been possible if out with her 'normal' friends. There is certainly a lot to be said for photographing in groups, although I think many of us also felt that there was not enough time for conversation as well. To me, that is just a great excuse to meet up again and we're really hoping this meet-up can be the first of several.

That evening, we were once more uploading



© Lee Rudd

The call for a café's patio chairs is somewhat reduced in winter. These stacked up chairs appealed to many of us, but Lee Rudd converted them into an abstract art form

the day's shots on PBase and exchanging comments. Not only that, but others had caught the bug and future meets are now being planned in North West England and Tennessee. I thoroughly commend the experience to both groups and all those that follow, as you will have a lot of fun and strengthen friendships, as well as develop your photographic skills by being with others.

© Sharon Rogers

Sharon Rogers tackles two issues in one shot here. How do you photograph one the city's most photographed landmarks and make a decent picture in dull weather? Added to which, she has given a rural feel to the whole vista.

TOP TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEET UP

- Plan well ahead, 6-8 weeks at least
- Choose a location that offers varied photo opportunities whatever the weather
- Choose a rendezvous that is safe, identifiable and gives shelter from adverse weather
- Consider a second meet up time to catch 'stragglers'
- Schedule in an end of day coffee so people can say farewell and discuss the day
- Promote the meet up, and get initial ideas via the PBase forum
- Agree the detail by e-mail for safety and security
- Circulate maps and if possible a photo of the rendezvous
- Use at least one mobile/cell phone as a point of contact to cover the unexpected
- Remind people as the day approaches
- Familiarise yourself with the work of any photographers you don't know
- Have Fun, and don't forget the spare cards and batteries!

© Mark Rutter

Mark Rutter captures much of the group off guard here. Clockwise from bottom left: Ade Clarke, Sharon Rogers (praying), Ric Yates, Sam Yates, John Waine, Rosie (floradoragirl), Gail Davison, Ray Pettit, Kim Kong, Steve H, Bev Harrison. Bev's friend Carole Stevens takes centre stage. Tim Arbon and Lee Rudd are out of shot here.

© Mark Rutter

For the group shot we chose the large street mirror near Waterloo Station. This shot of Mark Rutter's gives an original take on this rendezvous, taken with his fish-eye lens. Lee Rudd is in the foreground here

Please email your comments and suggestions to magazine@pbase.com

Parting Shots

It started with a teacher
by, Eric Kuhn

In this issue of PBase Magazine we spoke with Joe McNally, one of the most sought after photographers in the industry. Viewing his photos, anyone can see his incredible talent as a photographer. But McNally never had aspirations to become a photographer. Rather, he went to school to become a writer and stumbled upon photography when fulfilling a requirement. He fell in love with the art.

When I think about Joe and his class, I cannot help but think of my first photography class in high school. Jeanne Newman (www.pbase.com/ntebrd) was my "Photo One" teacher. It was almost impossible to get into her popular class, but I was one of the lucky ones to obtain a line on the attendance sheet. Knowing nothing about photography, Ms. Newman (who is now one of my closest friends) brought photography to light in a fun, interesting, and educational way. Like McNally, I never really gave much thought to this art form, but fell in love practically the moment the course began. Of course, it was not too long after Jeanne started a PBase account that I followed suit.

Strolling through your galleries on "The Base" is an education in itself. For the most part, it is intimidating to see all of your great work, but it is also a wonderful learning experience which helps me grow in this craft. Likewise, working on the magazine has been great fun and also a learning experience. Interviewing professional photographers and reading through our final product is an awesome experience.

Thank you, Arjun, for being the glue of this publication and bringing all the pieces together, as always! Much credit and appreciation goes to Wanda Bates, Gary Blanchette, and Larena Woodmore. Of course, we would be nowhere without Emily and Slug, so hats off to them!

On behalf of the editorial team, I would like to thank you, our readers for downloading over 50,000 copies! Of course, your feedback is always appreciated. Please email us with thoughts, questions, or comments at magazine@pbase.com. Also, check out our blog and buy your very own PBase Magazine merchandise here.

Finally, if you liked this or previous issues, e-mail or print them out and send the magazine to your friends and family!

See you next issue!

THE GANG:

Gary Blanchette,
Cover Design
www.pbase.com/gpaai

Wanda Bates, proof reading
www.pbase.com/slowpokebill

Larena Woodmore,
PDF conversion
www.pbase.com/larena

Eric Kuhn

Do you know some people who you believe offer sage advice ?

We are always on the lookout for high-quality articles to be featured in our *Learning, Photoshopography* and *Gear Talk* sections. If you would like to refer someone to us for consideration for these sections, please drop us an email at magazine@pbase.com !

How do I contribute ?

If you think you would like to contribute, just email us with a specific idea. Please do not email us asking "what can I do to help ?". Honestly, we would not know the answer to that question.

Instead, if you can propose a concrete idea, it makes it easier for us to be specific in return.

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for
reading
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